

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 IO-13 HA-05 EB-08 MCT-01 /086 W
-----064645 280926Z /20

R 271155Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4587
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1429
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
USMISSION USBERLIN
USMISSION USNATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRAGUE 0235

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PEPR, CZ
SUBJECT: NATO LUNCHEON DISCUSSION JANUARY 25

1. DISCUSSION AT MONTHLY NATO AMBASSADORS' LUNCHEON CONCENTRATED
MAINLY ON RUMORS OF INTRA-LEADERSHIP CONFLICT, WHICH WE HAVE COVERED
ELSEWHERE, AND VISIT OF WEST GERMAN SPD DELEGATION(PRAGUE 0176).
FOLLOWING ARE MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS OF POSSIBLE INTEREST TO ADDRESSEES.

2. HUSAK HEALTH: BOTH THE NEW ITALIAN AND PORTUGUESE AMBASSADORS
HAVE HAD THEIR PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS PUT OFF SEVERAL TIMES.
OFFICIALLY, PRESIDENT HUSAK IS NOW SAID TO BE "ON VACATION", BUT
UNOFFICIALLY BOTH HAVE BEEN TOLD HE HAS AN EYE PROBLEM,
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POSSIBLY INVOLVING CATARACTS. (COMMENT: HUSAK'S LAST RECORDED
PUBLIC APPEARANCE WAS JANUARY 16, BUT PRESIDENTIAL FLAG
CONTINUES TO FLY OVER HRADCANY, INDICATING HE IS STILL IN COUNTRY.
END COMMENT). FRG EMBASSY HAS BEEN ATTEMPTING TO DETERMINE
WHETHER HUSAK'S WEST GERMAN EYE DOCTOR HAS ALREADY TRAVELLED OR
WILL SOON TRAVEL TO PRAGUE.

3. CURRENCY REFORM: BRITISH AMBASSADOR SAID HE HAS DEFINITE INFORMATION THAT NEW BANKNOTES ARE BEING PRINTED AND WILL BE READY FOR CIRCULATION IN FALL. HE WONDERED WHETHER THIS FACT MAY HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO RECENT RUMORS OF "CURRENCY REFORM". (COMMENT: SEVERAL YEARS AGO GOC INAUGURATED PROGRAM TO REPLACE BANKNOTES IN CIRCULATION WITH SERIES IN WHICH SIZE VARIES ACCORDING TO VALUE. THEN DID NOT CARRY THROUGH COMPLETELY, WITH RESULT THAT 500 KCS NOTES NOW IN CIRCULATION ARE SUBSTANTIALLY SMALLER THAN 100 KCS NOTES. THIS REPORTED PRINTING MAY BE SIMPLY TO COMPLETE ISSUANCE OF NEW SERIES. WE NOTE THAT A SIMILAR RATIONALIZATION OF COIN SIZES IS NOW BEING COMPLETED. END COMMENT.)

4. HUSAK VISIT TO FRG: AMBASSADOR DIESEL SAID FRG HAS OFFERED THE PERIOD APRIL 11-14 FOR THE VISIT, BUT HAS RECEIVED NO REPLY. HE ADDED THAT FOREIGN MINISTER GENSCHER HAD SEEN CHNOUPEK AT UNGA IN THE FALL AND BOTH AGREED IN PRINCIPLE TO A ONE-DAY PREPARATORY VISIT TO BONN BY CHNOUPEK. SUBSEQUENTLY, CHNOUPEK INDICATED HE MIGHT MAKE THIS VISIT IN MID-FEBRUARY, BUT THUS FAR GOC HAS NOT SUGGESTED A FIRM DATE. DIESEL NOTED IT IS NOW CLEAR THAT A BREZHNEV VISIT TO BONN DOES NOT HAVE TO PRECEDE HUSAK'S.

5. CHARTER 77: CHARTER SPOKESMAN (AND DUBECK'S FOREIGN MINISTER) JIRI HAJEK'S BOOK ON EVENTS OF 1968, "PRAGUE AFTER TEN YEARS", HAS BEEN PRINTED IN FRANCE. FRENCH AMBASSADOR D'HARCOURT HAD COPY IN FRENCH, BUT DID NOT KNOW IF IT APPEARED IN OTHER LANGUAGES. CONFIDENTIAL

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(COMMENT: JAN 26 RUDE PRAVO CONTAINS FIRST PUBLIC MENTION HERE OF THE BOOK. END COMMENT.)

6. FURTHER NOTES FROM SPD VISIT: (A) DELEGATION LEADER HERBERT WEHNER FOUND HUSAK RELAXED AND SELF-CONFIDENT. HUSAK NOTED PRESSURE AGAINST HIS REGIME FROM WESTERN MEDIA AND FORTHRIGHTLY ASKED HIS VISITORS HOW THEY WOULD HANDLE DISSIDENCE SUCH AS CHARTER 77, EMPHASIZING THAT UNLESS CZECH DISSIDENCE WERE SOMEHOW CONTROLLED, "ANOTHER 1968" WAS POSSIBLE, AND HE JUST COULD NOT AFFORD TO LET THAT HAPPEN. HUSAK FORMALLY PROMISED, WITH A HANDSHAKE, THAT FRG JOURNALIST WERNER GENGENBACH WOULD BE RELEASED "IMMEDIATELY" (BUT AS OF JANUARY 25 HE IS APPARENTLY STILL IN PRISON). AMBASSADOR DIESEL TOLD ME GENSCHER MADE CLEAR TO CHNOUPEK WITHOUT HIS RELEASE, THERE WILL BE NO HUSAK VISIT. HE ALSO HINTED BROADLY THAT PERSONS RECENTLY CONVICTED OF POLITICAL CRIMES WOULD BE RELEASED "VERY SOON". (NOTE: IT WAS NOT CLEAR WHETHER THIS WAS A REFERENCE ONLY TO THE FOUR CONVICTED IN OCTOBER, OF WHOM ORNEST AND LEDERER RECEIVED PRISON SENTENCE WHILE HAVEL AND PAVLICEK RECEIVED SUSPENDED SENTENCES, OR PERHAPS TO THE SCIENTISTS LASTUVKA AND MACHACEK, CONVICTED IN SEPTEMBER. IT SEEMS LIKELY THERE WILL BE AN AMNESTY FOR VICTORIOUS FEBRUARY AND THAT HUSAK MAY HAVE BEEN REFERRING TO THAT, ALTHOUGH WE FIND

IT HARD TO BELIEVE THAT THE FOUR NAMED ABOVE WILL BE RELEASED SO
SOON. END NOTE).

(B) BILAK, IN HIS MEETINGS WITH DELEGATION, BUBBLED WITH
REMINISCENCES OF PAST EXPERIENCES WITH WEHNER. HE DWELT ON
INTEREST IN IMPORTING WESTERN TECHNOLOGY AND IN THAT VEIN, CLAIMED
THAT HE WAS PRESSING HUSAK TO STEP UP CZECHOSLOVAK ECONOMIC TIES
WITH THE WEST.

(C) STROUGAL EMBRACED WEHNER IN FAREWELL AND DESCRIBED THE VISIT
AS A "BREAKTHROUGH THAT CANNOT BE REVERSED".
BYRNE

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